

DATE: January 27, 2006

SUBJECT: Board of Regents Universities, Regents On-line Degree Program, Masters of Professional Studies

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Approval

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The bachelors' degree in Professional Studies was one the first five RODP programs approved in 2001. In the first year there were over 200 students enrolled and as of Fall 2005, that number has more than doubled. The proposed Master of Professional Studies (MPS) is in response to student demand for advanced study in an interdisciplinary graduate degree program in the social sciences. The 33-hour MPS program is designed for working adults who wish to pursue graduate professional studies that combine two or more disciplines. Because the MPS student's academic needs and interests are multidisciplinary, they generally are not served by traditional professional programs. For-profit universities have taken the lead in this segment of higher education. The MPS program seeks to provide affordable, higher quality online graduate education.

PROPOSED START-UP DATE: Fall 2006

Commission staff has reviewed program proposals according to the academic standards adopted by the Commission on November 14, 2002. Each standard is referenced below.

1.1.20A MISSION: The proposed program is consistent with the mission of the Regents On-line Degree Program (RODP) and the Tennessee Board of Regents schools to provide access to quality higher education opportunities and provide alternatives to more expensive online programs offered by for-profit schools.

1.1.20B CURRICULUM: The proposed curriculum requires completion of 33 semester hours, with 11 hours requiring new courses. MPS offers graduate programs that include, new interdisciplinary courses, existing graduate courses and a culminating professional project.

The MPS allows for the development of professionally oriented, interdisciplinary graduate studies that encourage students to make connections between various professional fields and traditional social science disciplines. The availability of online classes will allow students to pursue the degree with minimal disruption to work and family life. Professionals are increasingly choosing online graduate programs to fulfill their educational needs.

<u>Course Name</u>	<u>Credit Hours</u>
Core Requirements	9
Concentration	21

1.1.20C ACADEMIC STANDARDS:

Requirements for unconditional admission: An undergraduate grade point average of at least 2.75 on a 4.0 scale from an accredited college or university. An acceptable score on the GRE; at least 400 verbal, 500 quantitative, and a 4.0 on analytical writing. Applicants with five or more years of professional work experience may submit a portfolio in lieu of the GRE. The portfolio is to include: a resume; a 500 to 600 word essay detailing the reasons for wanting to enter the MPS program and discussing how the program will help the applicant achieve personal and professional goals; two letters of professional reference and may include a portfolio describing professional responsibilities, achievements and awards/recognitions.

Requirements for conditional admission: Applicants who do not meet the requirements for unconditional admission might be admitted conditionally if their entire academic and professional records indicate potential for success in the program. Conditions may include, but are not limited to, taking prerequisite undergraduate courses, enrolling in specified graduate-level courses, and achieving a specified grade point average.

Projected Program Productivity

Student Projections	Full-time Enrollment	Part-time Enrollment	Graduates
Year 1	5	20	0
Year 2	10	40	5
Year 3	10	60	25
Year 4	10	60	25
Year 5	10	60	25

Based on need, inquiries, enrollment projections may be conservative and are presented as minimum expectations. The Regents Online Degree Program marketing plan confirms its commitment to recruitment and retention activities that will assure that enrollment projections are met.

1.1.20D FACULTY: No additional faculty is required. Faculty from all six TBR universities will be developing and teaching courses.

1.1.20E LIBRARY RESOURCES: No additional library resources are required. Electronic access is available for RODP students at no additional cost.

1.1.20F ADMINISTRATION/ORGANIZATION: The proposed program will be housed in the appropriate academic unit as determined by each university.

1.1.20G SUPPORT RESOURCES: There is twenty-four hour student services and technical assistance to support all RODP programs.

1.1.20H FACILITIES/INSTRUCTIONAL EQUIPMENT: N/A

1.1.20I STUDENT/EMPLOYER DEMANDS: The proposed Master of Professional Studies is in direct response to the demands of existing students for graduate-level education online. In today's workplace in which applicants for professional jobs are finding opportunities increasingly competitive, Tennesseans need advanced university degrees to compete. Whereas the baccalaureate degree used to be the door to professional opportunities, many professionals are finding that they are competing with applicants holding master's degrees. The Master of Professional Studies will appeal to full-time professionals who wish to gain an advantage for the next promotion opportunity by earning a graduate degree on a part-time basis.

1.1.20J NO UNNECESSARY DUPLICATION: N/A

1.1.20K COOPERATIVE INSTITUTIONS: All six TBR universities are collaborating to develop and offer the courses that compose the curriculum.

1.1.20L DESEGREGATION: The program will not impede the state's effort to achieve racial diversity.

1.1.20M ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION: Beyond the standards for measuring the effectiveness and success of the program as noted for SACS, an "internal" program evaluation plan will be implemented. The Master of Professional Studies Committee will serve as oversight for all evaluation processes. In addition, the RODP Curriculum Evaluation & Assessment Committee will implement and monitor the evaluation plan.

1.1.20N ARTICULATION: N/A

1.1.20O EXTERNAL JUDGMENT (Graduate Programs): Dr. L. Lee Schmidt, Dean (Emeritus), College of Business and Technology, Texas A & M University served as consultant to provide the expert on-line external review. Dr. Schmidt noted that the fact that it is being offered on-line as a strength of the proposed program because it will be more feasible for working adults and also more affordable than the principle competitor, the University of Phoenix. He was pleased that the curriculum contained three core areas that are considered the foundation in a Masters program in Professional Studies. Dr. Schmidt especially liked the "collaborative spirit" of the RODP model that involves the six TBR universities. His report strongly recommended approval.

1.1.20P COST/BENEFIT/SOURCE: The benefit of offering the proposed program is having an alternative to the high-priced, online offerings of degrees delivered by adjunct instructors. The proposed RODP Master of Professional Studies is designed to position students to advance in their careers when opportunities arise. Although the schools are offering other online programs, the proposed MPS will have strong appeal to a wide range of working professionals. The flexibility and interdisciplinary curriculum will allow the RODP Universities to respond to the needs for career development emerging in Tennessee.

Financial Projection

Expenditures <i>*The funds to start up and support this program will come from the RODP Online Fees</i>	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
A. One – time					
Course Development *16 16 courses x \$6000 – yr 1 revisions/updates – yr 4	\$96,000	\$36,000	\$36,000	\$36,000	\$36,000
Consultants	\$ 3,500	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Other	0	0	0	0	0

1.1.30 POST APPROVAL MONITORING: An annual performance review of the proposed program will be conducted for the first five years following approval. The review will be based on goals established in the approved program proposal. At the end of this period, campus, governing board, and Commission staff will perform a summative evaluation. These goals include, but are not limited to enrollment and graduation numbers, program costs, progress toward accreditation, library acquisitions, student performance and other goals set by the institution and agreed upon by governing board and Commission staff. As a result of this evaluation, if the program is found to be deficient, the Commission may recommend that the governing board terminate the program. Copies of such recommendation will be forwarded to the Education Committees of the General Assembly. The Commission may also choose to extend this period if additional time is needed and requested by the governing board.